



NEWS RELEASE

**NELSON P. COHEN
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
DISTRICT OF ALASKA**

Federal Building & U.S. Courthouse • 222 W. 7th Avenue • Room 253 • Anchorage, AK 99513-7567 • (907) 271-5071

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, June 4, 2008

08-73

**THOMAS RANES SENTENCED TO 30 YEARS
ON INTERNATIONAL DRUG CONSPIRACY
AND RELATED CHARGES**

ANCHORAGE, AK –United States Attorney Nelson P. Cohen announced today, June 4, 2008, that Thomas P. Ranes, a resident of Anchorage, Alaska, was sentenced to thirty years' imprisonment for his leadership role in a marijuana conspiracy that imported over a ton of Canadian pot to Alaska and left at least two conspirators dead and another shot repeatedly. Ranes, age 33, pleaded guilty in federal court on February 8 to marijuana conspiracy, money laundering, and international money laundering. Ranes also admitted legal culpability for death of Thomas Cody, the former leader of the drug conspiracy. United States District Court Judge Ralph R. Beistline imposed the 360 month sentence.

In connection with the February guilty plea, Ranes admitted that beginning in early 2003 and continuing through April 22, 2006, he agreed with Thomas Cody, Joseph Bryant, Dennis Shine and other individuals, to facilitate the importation and distribution of Canadian marijuana. During the course of his involvement, this group imported over 1,000 kilograms of marijuana. Ranes helped the group achieve these goals by fabricating hidden compartments in commercial trucks and other vehicles to facilitate the importation of the marijuana; arranging for the structuring of cash bank deposits involving the proceeds of the conspiracy so that the bank would not file currency transaction reports, disclosing the deposit of large quantities of currency; arranging for the wire transfer to the Ukraine of funds received in payment for marijuana; assisting Thomas Cody by paying him as an "employee" of Ranes's business, Ranes and Shine, despite the fact that he did no work for the business, which enabled Cody to conceal his involvement in the conspiracy; and driving from Canada into the United States in vehicles in which marijuana was concealed.

According to the government's statements at the change of plea in February and in sentencing documents filed with the court, during the time Ranes was involved in the conspiracy, he learned that in January 2003, Thomas Cody had arranged for an assault to be made upon another individual who was setting up a competing marijuana distribution network. The assault was committed by shooting the other individual five times with a firearm. Later, Cody also threatened Ranes with violence when Ranes failed to repay debts owed to Cody.

The government alleged that by May 2005, Ranes had become instrumental in the management of the marijuana trafficking business, as Cody removed himself from the dirty work of coordinating and breaking down the shipments of marijuana. Ranes managed these functions, with Cody and his partner Joe Bryant providing financing and distribution contacts, and also receiving the lions' share of the profits. In May 2005, Cody was involved in the purchase of commercial real estate in Odessa, Ukraine. Cody needed to send \$1 million dollars cash to the Ukraine and arranged for the money to be sent to Canada for pickup by a courier from Ukraine. Ranes, being responsible for transportation, arranged to send the \$1 million dollars, along with approximately \$600,000 for payment for marijuana, by concealing it in one of the trucks that was scheduled to pickup marijuana from Whitehorse. As was the custom, the Canadian drivers would meet the American driver and transfer the money for the marijuana. However, the Canadian drivers, Kurtis Croy and Kyle McDonald-Wolochatiuk, were stopped by the RCMP and arrested near Whitehorse; 225 pounds of marijuana and one ounce of ecstasy was seized.

According to government filings, Cody was irate about the seizure. Ranes instructed his driver, Curtis McDonald, to continue driving to Vancouver. At that point, Ranes came up with a plan. He could erase debts to Cody and make himself one million dollars profit by getting rid of Cody. As side benefits, Ranes would be free from Cody's threats and would assume a greater role in the marijuana conspiracy, with an increased share of the profits. Over the course of a few days, Ranes convinced Dennis Shine to kill Cody by telling Shine that he would get one-half million dollars for doing it. In the meantime, Ranes lied to Cody and told him Ranes he was arranging for the money to be brought back to Alaska, rather than have the money exchange occur in Canada. Cody made arrangements for the courier from Ukraine to come to Alaska to pick up the money. Ranes spoke to Shine using two prepaid cellular telephones to discuss the details of the murder and disposal.

However, according to the government, Ranes never had any intention of bringing the money back to Alaska – at least not immediately. Instead, he told his driver, Curtis McDonald, to give it to one of the sources of supply for marijuana in Canada. While this was happening, Shine was attempting to get up the nerve to kill Cody; he had manufactured a silencer for his 9 mm Beretta pistol at the Ranes & Shine shop. Shine backed out of three prior attempts before finally hiding in Cody's house and shooting Cody when he returned home at approximately 2:30 pm on June 1, 2005. Shine called Ranes for help after Cody was shot, but Ranes claimed he was "too busy at work" to help Shine with Cody's body.

Ultimately, the government alleges that Ranes and Shine met in Jim Creek to dispose of Cody's body. By the time Ranes arrived, Shine had just finished burying Cody and Ranes helped cover up the grave and burn the car Cody had been driving (which was actually Ranes's wife's car). Shine then drove up to Fairbanks while Ranes got a ride to Anchorage from one of Ranes's employees. Ranes confessed what he and Shine had done to the employee.

According to the filings, after Cody's death, Ranes assumed a greater role in the marijuana trafficking and smuggling conspiracy than he had held before, organizing shipments and arranging deliveries. Ranes maintained that role until arrested in April 2006, when the conspiracy effectively ended after the joint federal and state task force raided the Ranes and Shine shop, as well as 13 other locations around Anchorage. Joseph Bryant killed himself in June 2005, shortly before he was to be indicted for his role in the conspiracy. Tom Cody's body was recovered from the Jim Creek area by the investigators in July 2007.

Ranes' court-appointed attorney, Allen Bentley of Seattle, admitted that his client had lived "life in the fast lane" and had acted out the role of a drug dealer, behaving in ways that were "cocky," "obnoxious," and "immature," but argued that the 30-year prison term was unduly harsh. In personally addressing the court, Raney stated he was "not a killer" and denied telling Shine to kill Cody or any other prior knowledge of the murder. The judge told the defendant, that he showed "very little remorse" for his actions and concluded that Raney had been "motivated primarily by greed."

Judge Beistline ordered that pursuant to the plea agreement, the defendant must forfeit property that was either the proceeds of or was used to facilitate the drug conspiracy, giving up his interest in 83 assets including numerous firearms, vehicles, real property, and currency. The total value of the assets is several million dollars. Linda Enders, the IRS Assistant Special Agent in Charge of Alaska, said "This conspiracy as a whole was about unrelenting greed, along with a complete disregard for the lives others as shown by the violence that was committed and by the volume of marijuana that was imported."

Harvey Goehring, DEA Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the Anchorage District office, commented: "This is a good example of federal, state, and local law enforcement working together, and at the end of the day, we have a safer community for all." Lieutenant Andrew Greenstreet of the Alaska State Troopers echoed these thoughts, adding, "Recognizing the significance of this case the Alaska State Troopers invested over 8900 hours on this joint investigation." "The importation of illegal drugs is a serious crime with significant penalties," said Leigh Winchell, special agent in charge of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) office of investigations that oversees Alaska. "ICE will continue to work aggressively with our law enforcement partners to stop this type of drug trafficking activity and dismantle the criminal networks that seek to profit from the narcotics trade."

To date, Judge Beistline has sentenced four other Raney & Shine co-conspirators. According to court documents, their roles, names and sentences are as follows: marijuana trafficker Yin Tak Miu, who received a sentence of 48 months in prison; driver Rodney Rhoden, who received a sentence of 34 months in prison. Driver and money launderer Kevin Browning, who received a sentence of 20 months and a \$1,000 fine; driver Robert McDonald, who received a sentence of 20 months and a \$10,000 fine. The remaining co-conspirators are scheduled to be sentenced at the end of June and beginning of July.

The Alaska State Troopers Major Offender's Unit, the Drug Enforcement Administration, Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigations Division, and the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement conducted the investigation that led to the prosecution of Raney, Shine, and the other defendants.

###